

# Lawmakers Request Answers on DOE Land Transfer Changes



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Congressman Doc Hastings  
December 11, 2013

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In a letter to the U.S. Department of Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz, Congressman Doc Hastings (WA-04) today requested information about recent changes to federal rules regarding land transfers at former defense nuclear sites like Hanford. Representatives Chuck Fleischmann (TN-03), Joe Wilson (SC-02), John J. Duncan, Jr. (TN-02), Ed Whitfield (KY-01), and Ben Ray Lujan (NM-03) joined Hastings and called on the Department of Energy (DOE) to seek input from impacted communities before moving forward with changes.

"Here in the Tri-Cities, the federal government took privately-owned land to construct Hanford and, as the cleanup mission is completed, that land should be returned to the community," said Hastings. "Communities should not have to jump through endless bureaucratic red tape simply to get their land back. I want to be certain that land transfers at Hanford will not be more difficult or take even longer because of these changes."

The 1998 National Defense Authorization Act required the U.S. Secretary of Energy to issue regulations for the transfer of property at DOE defense nuclear facilities for the "purpose of permitting the economic development of the property." While the intent of Congress remains clear, the Department's recent modifications could make it more difficult for land to be transferred to local communities. The changes could result in increased costs and risks for local communities, and appears likely to result in an even lengthier process by removing any deadline for responding to requests for land. For nearly three years, Hanford's Community Reuse Organization has had a land transfer request pending with the Department and the community has been told it still could take yet another 18 months or more. Hastings authored a House-passed amendment to the 2014 National Defense Authorization bill that would execute this 1600 acre transfer. Senate Democrats blocked the amendment from the expected final Defense bill.

In the letter to Secretary Moniz, the lawmakers expressed concern that regulatory changes were made with zero input from the very communities the underlying law was intended to help. "There is no better way for the Department to demonstrate that cleanup at these sites has been successful, than to return the land for economic and beneficial use by the communities," they continued.

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